

P O E M S

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P O E M S

BY

JEAN INGELOW



VOLUME I.

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DEDICATION

TO

GEORGE KILGOUR INGELOW

YOUR LOVING SISTER

OFFERS YOU THESE POEMS, PARTLY AS

AN EXPRESSION OF HER AFFECTION, PARTLY FOR THE

PLEASURE OF CONNECTING HER EFFORTS

WITH YOUR NAME

KENSINGTON : *June 1863*

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* This Poem is now published for the first time.

The Vignette is from a Drawing by Miss F. W. CURREY



DIVIDED.

†

AN empty sky, a world of heather,
 Purple of foxglove, yellow of broom ;
We two among them wading together,
 Shaking out honey, treading perfume.

Crowds of bees are giddy with clover,
 Crowds of grasshoppers skip at our feet,
Crowds of larks at their matins hang over,
 Thanking the Lord for a life so sweet.

Flusheth the rise with her purple favour,
 Gloweth the cleft with her golden ring,
'Twixt the two brown butterflies waver,
 Lightly settle, and sleepily swing.

We two walk till the purple dieth
 And short dry grass under foot is brown ;
But one little streak at a distance lieth
 Green like a ribbon to prank the down.

II

Over the grass we stepped unto it,
And God He knoweth how blithe we were !
Never a voice to bid us eschew it :
Hey the green ribbon that showed so fair !

Hey the green ribbon ! we kneeled beside it,
We parted the grasses dewy and sheen ;
Drop over drop there filtered and滑了
A tiny bright beck that trickled between.

Tinkle, tinkle, sweetly it sang to us,
Light was our talk as of faëry bells—
Faëry wedding-bells faintly rung to us
Down in their fortunate parallels.

Hand in hand, while the sun peered over,
We lapped the grass on that youngling spring ;
Swept back its rushes, smoothed its clover,
And said, ‘ Let us follow it westering.’

III

A dappled sky, a world of meadows,
Circling above us the black rooks fly
Forward, backward ; lo, their dark shadows
Flit on the blossoming tapestry—

Flit on the beck, for her long grass parteth
As hair from a maid's bright eyes blown back ;
And, lo, the sun like a lover darteth
His flattering smile on her wayward track.

Sing on ! we sing in the glorious weather
Till one steps over the tiny strand,
So narrow, in sooth, that still together
On either brink we go hand in hand.

The beck grows wider, the hands must sever.
On either margin, our songs all done,
We move apart, while she singeth ever,
Taking the course of the stooping sun.

He prays, 'Come over'—I may not follow ;
I cry, 'Return'—but he cannot come :
We speak, we laugh, but with voices hollow ;
Our hands are hanging, our hearts are numb.

IV

A breathing sigh, a sigh for answer,
A little talking of outward things :
The careless beck is a merry dancer,
Keeping sweet time to the air she sings.

A little pain when the beck grows wider ;
‘Cross to me now—for her wavelets swell :’
‘I may not cross’—and the voice beside her
Faintly reacheth, though heeded well.

No backward path ; ah ! no returning ;
No second crossing that ripple’s flow :
‘Come to me now, for the west is burning ;
Come ere it darkens ;’—‘Ah, no ! ah, no !’

Then cries of pain, and arms outreaching—
The beck grows wider and swift and deep :
Passionate words as of one beseeching—
The loud beck drowns them ; we walk, and weep.

v

A yellow moon in splendour drooping,
A tired queen with her state oppressed,
Low by rushes and swordgrass stooping,
Lies she soft on the waves at rest.

The desert heavens have felt her sadness ;
Her earth will weep her some dewy tears ;
The wild beck ends her tune of gladness,
And goeth stilly as soul that fears.

We two walk on in our grassy places
On either marge of the moonlit flood,
With the moon's own sadness in our faces,
Where joy is withered, blossom and bud.

VI

A shady freshness, chafers whirring,
A little piping of leaf-hid birds ;
A flutter of wings, a fitful stirring,
A cloud to the eastward snowy as curds.

Bare grassy slopes, where kids are tethered ;
Round valleys like nests all fern-y-lined ;
Round hills, with fluttering tree-tops feathered,
Swell high in their freckled robes behind.

A rose-flush tender, a thrill, a quiver,
When golden gleams to the tree-tops glide ;
A flashing edge for the milk-white river,
The beck, a river—with still sleek tide.

Broad and white, and polished as silver,
On she goes under fruit-laden trees ;
Sunk in leafage cooeth the culver,
And 'plaineth of love's disloyalties.

Glitters the dew and shines the river,
Up comes the lily and dries her bell ;
But two are walking apart for ever,
And wave their hands for a mute farewell.

VII

A braver swell, a swifter sliding ;
The river hasteth, her banks recede :
Wing-like sails on her bosom gliding
Bear down the lily and drown the reed.

Stately prows are rising and bowing
(Shouts of mariners winnow the air),
And level sands for banks endowing
The tiny green ribbon that showed so fair.

While, O my heart ! as white sails shiver,
And crowds are passing, and banks stretch wide,
How hard to follow, with lips that quiver,
That moving speck on the far-off side !

Farther, farther—I see it—know it—
My eyes brim over, it melts away :
Only my heart to my heart shall show it
As I walk desolate day by day.

VIII

And yet I know past all doubting, truly—
A knowledge greater than grief can dim—
I know, as he loved, he will love me duly—
Yea, better—e'en better than I love him.

And as I walk by the vast calm river,
The awful river so dread to see,
I say, ‘Thy breadth and thy depth for ever
Are bridged by his thoughts that cross to me.’

